

County of Sonoma

*Local Coastal
Program*



Part I

Local Coastal Plan

Part I

LOCAL COASTAL PLAN

SONOMA COUNTY

The original publication was prepared with financial assistance from the Office of Coastal Zone Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, under the provisions of the Federal Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972, as amended, and from the California Coastal Commission, under the provisions of the California Coastal Act of 1976.

The LCP was amended to be consistent with the Sonoma County General Plan and certified by the California Coastal Commission on December 12, 2001.

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TOBY ROSS, Project Director
JEAN FREITAS, Project Planner
MELANIE PERRY, Project Planner
JAN WOODRUFF, Project Planner

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KEN ELLISON, Project Planner
KATHI JACOBS, Project Planner

Report Production and Graphics

1981: Brice Gregerson, Mapping Coordinator
Gary Mann, Report Coordinator
Lenza Smith, Drafting Technician
Ruth Lund, Word Processor

Current: Sher Ennis, Map Drafting Technician
Florence Wheeler, Report Format & Word processing
Pat Stoddard, Comprehensive Planning Secretary
Darcy Henry, Geographic Information Technician

NOTE:

In 1981, the County adopted the Coastal Plan, Coastal Zoning Ordinance, and Coastal Administrative Manual planning documents prepared under specific requirements of State law and intended to provide an intermediate level of detail between the 1978 General Plan and site development plans submitted to the County for approval. The 1978 General Plan focused on policies of Countywide significance and utilized generalized graphics to illustrate land use, open space and other elements.

In 1989, the County adopted an update of the 1978 General Plan. The General Plan update provided parcel-specific information concerning land use and open space. The General Plan update also included "area policies" in an attempt to focus particular attention on a specific area or parcel. Because of this level of specificity in the General Plan update, the Board of Supervisors determined that several of the specific plans, including the Coastal Plan, Coastal Zoning Ordinance, and Coastal Administrative Manual, were either duplicative or conflicted with the updated General Plan. The Board of Supervisors further determined that to the extent the specific plans and coastal documents provided policy guidance beyond that provided by the General Plan update, that such plans should be reviewed and revised to insure complete consistency with the General Plan. The General Plan includes a discussion of these specific plans and the Coastal Plan documents in Land Use Element Section 2.1.1 under Policy LU-1a.

This document was prepared pursuant to General Plan Policy LU-1a.

In keeping with the above intent, these revisions of the Coastal Plan/Coastal Zoning Ordinance/Coastal Administrative Manual did not include exhaustive evaluation or reconsideration of the policies or designations contained in this plan. The scope of the revisions was limited to that necessary to achieve General Plan consistency.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Coastal Act

The Coastal Act was passed by the State Legislature in 1976, and it became effective on January 1, 1977. The act replaced the original Coastal initiative, Proposition 20, passed in 1972. In adopting the Act, the legislature declared that its basic goals were to:

Protect, maintain, and where feasible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the coastal zone environment and its natural and man-made resources.

Assure orderly balanced utilization and conservation of coastal zone resources taking into account the social and economic needs of the people of the state.

Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize public recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.

Assure priority for coastal dependent development over other development on the coast.

Encourage State and local initiatives and cooperation in preparing procedures to implement coordinated planning and development for mutually beneficial uses, including educational uses, in the coastal zone.

The Act established a framework for resolving controversies over the use of land in the coastal zone. Through its policies, it sets up a land use priority system which gives the highest priority to the preservation and protection of environmentally sensitive habitats and prime agricultural and timber that the maximum amount of prime resource land shall be maintained in production.

On shoreline lands which are not sensitive habitats or prime agricultural or timber lands, development which requires a site on or adjacent to the sea, has the next priority. On lands not needed for any of the above, the next priority goes to public recreation and visitor serving facilities.

Private development is permitted after all these priorities have been considered (see Table I-1).

The 1976 Coastal Act transferred the responsibility of preparing a Coastal Plan from the State and Regional Coastal Commissions to each of the 15 counties and 53 cities along the coast. Each jurisdiction is responsible for developing a Coastal Plan covering a 20 year planning period which brings local government plans and regulations, as well as those of all public agencies into conformance with State Coastal Act policies. Plans are to be reviewed and updated every five years.

Citizen Participation

Citizen participation has been prominent in Sonoma County's Coastal Plan process. Eighty-five persons have been involved on citizen committees. They have provided valuable assistance, direction and information throughout plan development.

Five Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) with eight to twelve citizens each were appointed by the County Board of Supervisors to assist staff in the preparation and review of Coastal Plan tasks. The five TACs were organized according to tasks in the work program as follows:

TAC Committee	Work Program Tasks
1. Environment	Water and Marine Resources Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Areas Environmental Hazards
2. Resources	Agriculture Forestry
3. Recreation	Shoreline Access Recreation Facilities Visitor Serving Facilities
4. Harbor	Diking, Dredging and Filling Commercial Fishing and Recreational Boating
5. Development	Housing Public Services Transportation Visual Resources Land Use

Besides reviewing and commenting on discussion papers and draft reports, the Recreation TAC prepared a map of existing and potential accessways; the Harbor TAC conducted a fishing needs survey and prepared the Harbor Discussion paper; the Development Committee provided housing needs surveys; and the Environment TAC helped map environmentally sensitive resources. Each committee met formally four to six times.

Three Citizen Advisory Committee (CACs): the North Coast, South Coast and Countywide Committees, also reviewed the plan and set up public forums for discussion of coastal land use issues. At several meetings and at four public forums, major aspects of the coastal plan were discussed including: shoreline accessways, transportation, harbor development, housing and Bodega Bay land use. Changes in draft policy recommendations came about as a result of these meetings.

An eleven member Steering Committee, composed of one member from each TAC and two members from each CAC, was also formed to review end products and to resolve any policy conflicts which arose. They have met six times thus far, and will continue to provide input and policy direction through the implementation phase of the Coastal Plan.

In addition to the committee process, quarterly newsletters have been distributed to over 3000 coast residents, property owners and other interested persons. The newsletters report on Coastal Plan products and progress.

Coastal Plan Program

The Local Coastal Program is divided into three phases. Phase I was development of the Coastal Plan work program. Phase II is development of the Coastal Plan. Phase III is the implementation phase of the program which involves preparation and addition of any ordinance or administrative processes necessary to implement the plan.

Process

The Coastal Plan was prepared with the assistance of citizen and technical committees, public agencies, property owners, developers and the general public. Issue papers were prepared for the work tasks and reviewed by the responsible Technical and Citizen Advisory Committees. When there were questions or conflicts about policy recommendations, they were referred to the Steering Committee for resolution. The Coastal incorporates these policy resolutions, material from issues papers and material not previously published.

The Coastal Plan will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors, and concurrently by the CACs, TACs, and the Steering Committees. Following adoption by the Board of Supervisors, the Coastal Plan and later the Implementation Program must be submitted to the Regional and State Coastal Commissions for certification. The commissions must take the finding that the Coastal Plan is consistent with Coastal Act policies and that the Implementation Program is adequate to achieve the intent of the plan.

After certification of the Coastal Plan and Implementation Program, the review authority for new development within the coastal zone, which is now vested in the Coastal Commission, will be returned to local government. The local government, in issuing coastal development permits after certification, must make the finding that the development is in conformity with the approved Coastal Plan. Any amendments to a Coastal Plan will have to be approved by the State Coastal Commission.

Also after certification of local coastal plans, the Regional Coastal Commissions will be phased out. The State Coastal Commission will, however, continue to exercise permit jurisdiction over development in State Tidelands, and will continue to hear appeals on:

- developments approved by the local government between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea or within 300 feet of the inland extend of any beach or of the mean high tide line, whichever is the greatest distance;
- development approved by the local government not included in the above, on tidelands, submerged lands, public trust lands within 100 feet of any wetland, estuary, stream or within 500 feet of the top of the seaward face of any coastal bluff;
- any development approved by a coastal county not designated as the principle permitted use under the zoning ordinance;
- any development which constitutes a major public works project or a major energy facility.

TABLE I-1 PRIORITY OF COASTAL USES

	Rural, undeveloped areas	Already developed areas		
Priority of Use	High	Agriculture (prime coastal dependent), forestry (productive timberland), coastal dependent public recreation. (30213, 30241, 30242, 30243, 30250(a,b))	Coastal dependent* public recreation. (30213, 30220, 30221)	Coastal dependent industry and commerce, commercial fishing, coastal dependent public recreation and special communities. (30213, 30234, 30250(a,b), 30253(5), 30255)
			Water dependent* public recreation (30220, 30221, 30223)	
			Coastal or non-water* dependent public recreation (30220, 30221)	
			Visitor-serving* commercial recreation, lower cost (30222, 30213, 30250(c))	
			Visitor-serving* commercial recreation high cost (30222, 30250(c))	
				Moderately-priced housing.** (30213, 30250)
Low			Private residential,** general industrial or commercial development, high-priced housing. (30213, 30222, 30250, 30255)	

* Recreational uses of the coast that do not require extensive alteration of the natural environment have priority in intertidal and waterfront areas over recreational uses that would result in substantial alteration of the natural environment. (30233, 30235, 30255)

** Concentration of development policies (30250(a)) limit development in rural areas, except public recreation and visitor-serving uses.

Description

The Coastal Plan covers an area which is 55 miles in length and extends inland generally 1000 yards from the mean tide line. In significant coastal estuarine habitat and recreational areas it extends inland to the first major ridgeline paralleling the sea or five miles from the mean high boundary is generally 3000 to 12,000 feet inland from shoreline, except around Duncans Mills, Willow Creek and Valley Ford, where it extends up to five miles inland.

The Sonoma Coast is divided by the Russian River into north and south coast sections. The north coast is characterized by broad coastal terraces, high bluffs, a rocky shoreline with few major beaches, and rugged forested mountains east of Highway 1. Some of the timberland is commercially harvested. Terrace grasslands south of the Sea Ranch are excellent sheep grazing lands. Highway 1 is a beautiful, winding road along this stretch of the Coast. The highcliffs section north of Jenner is particularly spectacular. Prominent coastal communities or urban subdivisions include The Sea Ranch, Stewarts Point, Timber Cove and Jenner. Duncans Mills lies inland along the Russian River. Major State holdings are Kruse Rhododendron State Reserve, Salt Point State Park (including the Kruse Ranch acquisition), Fort Ross State Historic Park (including the Call Ranch and Eckert acquisitions) and the North Jenner Beach acquisition. County holdings include Gualala Point Park and Stillwater Cove.

South of the Russian River, the coast terraces narrow and give way to rolling grass covered hills. Highway 1 provides easy access to numerous state and county beaches and vista points. Most of the land west of Highway 1 is in public ownership and Willow Creek is a major State acquisition east of Highway 1. Scattered, highly visible residential subdivisions include Goat Rock, Sereno del Mar, Carmet and Salmon Creek. Bodega Bay is the major south coast community, and Valley Ford is an older agricultural center inland along the Estero Americano. Sheep and cattle grazing dominate coastal agriculture on the south coast, except for dairies around Valley Ford. Commercial timberland is limited to the Willow Creek drainage just south of the Russian River.

Mapping System

A system of ten subarea base maps at a scale of one inch equals 1000 feet (1:12,000) was used to map detailed land use, environmental, shoreline access, and recreation information. From north to south the subareas are: (1) Sea Ranch North, (2) Sea Ranch South, (3) Stewarts Point and Horseshoe Cove, (4) Salt Point, (5) Timber Cove, (6) The Highcliffs and Jenner, (7) Duncans Mills, (8) Willow Creek and Pacific View, (9) Bodega Bay, and (10) Valley Ford (see Figure I-1). Presentation maps of the Open Space, Recreation, and Land Use Plans are at a scale of 1 inch equals 2000 feet (1:24,000) or 1 inch equals 3000 feet (1:36,000).

Coastal Plan Summary and Organization

The Coastal Plan is organized into an organization and six chapters which closely relate to the original work tasks: Historic Resources, Environment, Resources, Recreation, Harbor and Development.

All of the chapters and sections within chapters must be considered together and not as separate, distinct units. The Land Use section, for example, was developed using information from all of the work tasks. However, it does not summarize all recommendations from other chapters. The Land Use, Open Space and Recreation and Access maps each constituted an official portion of the land use designation for any site.

The chapters, and chapter sections are introduced by applicable Coastal Act policies, followed by an issues discussion and policy recommendations relating to the issues. The recommendations are specific statements of policy intended to implement State Coastal Act policies. The policy recommendations speak strongly to preservation of coastal resources. They also address development of appropriate recreation and access facilities, and limited new urban development, except at Bodega Bay and The Sea Ranch where moderate expansion is proposed.

Historic Resources

The historic resources section provides an overall background to present coastal development. The origins and growth of coastal communities are presented. Four coastal communities are proposed for Historic District Zoning to help preserve their historic character: Stewarts Point, Plantation, Fort Ross and Duncans Mills. An inventory of historic sites was also prepared for possible designations as individual historic landmarks.

Environmental Resources and Hazards

Coastal Act policies encourage the productive maintenance and protection of marine resources and environmentally sensitive habitat areas. They also require that new development be located and designed to minimize risks to life and property from geologic hazards and flooding; and to avoid substantial alteration of natural land forms.

The Environment Chapter identifies rare and endangered plant locations, bird and animal habitats, wetlands, riparian corridors and other areas which are very sensitive to disturbance are mapped as Sanctuary Preservation or Conservation areas. In Sanctuary Preservation areas, essentially no development other than nature trails is allowed. In Conservation Areas no development is allowed unless an environmental study determines that the project can be accomplished with no adverse effects. Other management recommendations are proposed for each specific resource or habitat area.

The hazards section identifies flood plains, earthquake fault zones, unstable slopes subject to landslides and erosion, lands subject to tsunamis and high wildfire hazard areas. Recommendations to avoid or reduce such hazards to development are provided. Generally, this chapter delineates areas poorly suited for development.

Resources

The Resources Chapter concentrates on timber and agricultural resources. Coastal Act policies strongly encourage protection of the coast's productive resource base, emphasizing the maintenance of adequate commercial parcel sizes for timber and agricultural lands. In the Sonoma coastal zone, agricultural lands are primarily used for sheep and cattle grazing or dairies. The Resources Chapter contains maps of soils with high or moderate potential for grazing, cropland or timber production, and recommends low density zoning and other mechanisms to preserve their resource capabilities. Land divisions would be permitted only for agricultural or timber related development. Compatible uses in agricultural or timber areas are defined.

Recreation

Coastal Act policies state the public has a right to maximum access to the shoreline. The policies also give priority to recreation and visitor serving uses over all other uses except coastal dependent industry

and agriculture, and promote enhancement of public and private recreation opportunities. Development of recreation facilities and accessways are subject to other Coastal Act policies regarding protection of coastal resources.

Existing accessways and recreation and visitor serving uses were inventoried while other surveys identified needs along the coast for new recreation and support facilities. These surveys and Coastal Act policies formed the basis for the specific development recommendations in the chapter.

The Recreation Chapter contains three subsections: shoreline accessways, visitor serving and commercial facilities, and other recreational facilities. The access plan locates existing and potential shoreline accessways and proposes specific development standards and recommendations for new accessways. Visitor serving and commercial facilities identifies needs for and locations of restaurants, overnight accommodations and similar uses. Bodega Bay is the main location for new visitor serving and other commercial facilities, although several other locations are identified for expansion and limited new development if water and septic requirements can be met. The recreation subsection focuses on expansion and development of new campgrounds and other specific facilities at State and County parks and private day use areas.

Figure I-1

Harbor

The Harbor Chapter discusses Bodega Bay Harbor's docks, berths, and related facilities, recreational boating, and harbor dredging and filling. Coastal Act policies give priority to coastal dependent industry over other development on the coast. Facilities serving the commercial fishing and recreational boating industries are to be protected and upgraded. Bodega Harbor is the home of a major commercial fishing fleet with more than 250 commercial vessels. Existing dock and berthing facilities are limited. The Fisherman's Association has long identified a need for additional berthing space which was confirmed by a 1976 Small Craft Harbor Feasibility Study. Spud Point Marina is proposed by the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department to satisfy that need. In addition, owners of existing docks have expressed interest in expanding their berthing facilities. An expansion of 200-300 berths appears supportable in the short term. Harbor recommendations also encourage development of specific facilities such as gear loading areas.

The commercial fishing industry in Bodega Bay exists by virtue of a deep water channel dredged by the US Army Corp of Engineers in 1943. Continued uses and expanded facilities are dependent on future dredging: maintenance dredging and a large one time dredging for Spud Point Marina. To accomplish the dredging, disposal sites must be available. Several dredge spoils sites were evaluated in the Bodega Bay Area. Maintenance dredge spoils can continue to go on two disposal sites which have been used in the past. A new site is proposed to receive spoils from the Spud Point project. Ocean disposal is also a possibility.

Development

The Development Chapter has several subsections: housing, public services, transportation, visual resources, and land use. Coastal Act policies relating specifically to development state that location of new development shall be within or near existing developed areas able to accommodate it, or where such areas are not able to accommodate it, in areas with adequate public services and where it will not have

significant adverse effects on coastal resources. Public Works projects are to expand only to accommodate development consistent with the Coastal Act, provided that Highway 1 shall remain a scenic two lane road. Lower cost housing opportunities are to be protected. Scenic coastal views are also among the coast resources designated for protection under Coastal Act policies.

The Housing section identifies the need for low and moderate cost housing and proposes zoning and other strategies to provide such housing. A ~~program~~ Housing Opportunity designation, where a developer receives density bonuses for providing less than market rate units, is one of the major strategies. Bodega Bay and The Sea Ranch are the primary housing need areas.

The Public Service section evaluates water, waste disposal, emergency and education services. Generally, the coast is water scarce area, and land conditions are poor for septic systems. This lack of basic services limits development potential in most areas. The Sea Ranch and Bodega Bay become the main growth areas. Because the coast has a small population spread over large distances, emergency and education services are limited. It is not expected this situation will change substantially in the future.

The Transportation section recommends improvements to Highway 1 to increase its capacity. The major proposed improvement is a highway bypass around Bodega Bay, where peak weekend congestion is presently severe. Along the rest of the coast, intersection improvements, including turn lanes and signing, and improved parking management, are the primary means recommended to increase highway capacity. No major improvements to any east-west access road are recommended as feasible. Bicycle lanes and transit are promoted.

The Visual Resources section identifies visual characteristics of communities and natural land forms along the coast. Site and design guidelines are suggested to protect coastal views and to minimize other visual impacts of development.

The Land Use section identifies rural community and urban service boundaries for existing communities and urban subdivisions. Lands outside the urban service boundaries are not considered appropriate for urban development. Land inside urban service boundaries is appropriate for urban development consistent with Coastal Act policies. Land inside rural community boundaries is appropriate for development requiring public water but not public sewer, consistent with Coastal Plan policies. The Sea Ranch and Bodega Bay are the primary growth centers and receive more detailed discussion.

Several development issues at The Sea Ranch (water supply, septic monitoring, highway capacity, visual impacts, and public access) have been the subject of negotiations between the Coastal Commission, The Sea Ranch Association, and Oceanic California, Inc., the developer. In 1979, Overall Conditions to development were adopted by the Coastal Commission regarding these issues. The Coastal Commission specified that no new development could occur until the Overall Conditions were met. During the 1979-80 legislative session, the State Legislature passed the Bane Bill which preempted the authority of the Coastal Commission and the Sonoma County Coastal Plan with regard to existing lots at The Sea Ranch. The Bane Bill exempted single family residences on existing lots at The Sea Ranch from Coastal Act provisions if certain conditions were met dealing with public access, scenic view easements, height, site and bulk guidelines, transportation, water supply and septic monitoring. The Bane Bill went into effect in 1981 and specified that the County would enforce Height, Site and Bulk Criteria adopted by the Coastal Commission.

The question of ultimate buildout at The Sea Ranch was an issue left up to the Coastal Plan to resolve. The Overall Conditions and the Bane Bill recognize 2029 existing residential units. The Coastal Plan proposes to allow up to 300 additional residential units in designated areas, and 100 additional Lodge units in exchange for 15 percent affordable housing units for service workers, improvement of three

Highway 1 intersections, provision of a site to accommodate up to 100 transfer units, and improvement of two proposed accessways.

Bodega Bay

Two phased land use plans, for moderate and expanded development, were prepared for Bodega Bay. The two plans relate the amount of development with the construction of the proposed bypass around Bodega Bay. Development of Bodega Bay is presently constrained by lack of adequate highway capacity and water supplies, and by sensitive and hazardous lands. Without construction of the highway bypass, and full development of a proposed new well, only moderate additional development at Bodega Bay is possible. Sensitive and hazardous lands limit the location of new development.

Each of the plan designates land for three types of commercial development: fishing related, tourist and village commercial. Major new residential areas have housing opportunity designations to promote construction of lower cost units for fishermen and service workers.